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HOW TO... Defend your PC against spyware

Simon Edwards keeps malicious programs off his PC with the help of the McAfee software on this month's cover disc

McAfee AntiSpyware 2006



Spyware is a growing threat and even some anti-virus programs cannot provide suitable protection. Running a separate anti-spyware scanner could be all that stands between you having a good time using the web and hours of frustration, trying to fix an unresponsive PC and possibly even losing your personal details to an identity thief.

The full version of McAfee AntiSpyware 2006 on this month's cover disc includes 12 months of free updates and will protect your PC from spyware and prevent system settings from being changed illicitly.

1 Install the software from the cover disc, following the instructions carefully. When asked if you want to participate in the Virus Map Reporting system, make your own choice. Joining in allows your computer to send anonymous information about viruses on your PC to McAfee so it can track global infection rates.

When asked if you want to use McAfee's SecurityCenter as your default choice for managing Windows security settings, choose Yes to avoid receiving duplicate warning messages later.

2 At this stage you have installed the software but its anti-spyware detection capabilities are reduced because it only knows about old spyware files. Open the SecurityCenter by double-clicking its desktop icon and look for the option called 'updates', which is in the top right of the window. Click it, then click the Update button that appears.

If you haven't already registered with McAfee, now is your chance. It's free and allows AntiSpyware to download essential updates. Enter your details or log in using the username and password that you created if you've installed McAfee security software before.

3 The anti-spyware scanner will now monitor your system constantly in an attempt to repel spyware and the effects that it can have on your computer's operating system. Click the Scan Now button to start a full scan of your system. This is particularly important if you believe that your PC is already infected.

If you want to schedule a regular scan, and the default value of 5.30am doesn't suit, click on the link to the right of the 'Next scheduled scan' heading. Change the time to something convenient and choose from a Thorough scan and a Custom scan, which can examine a specified set of files. If you don't want to schedule a scan, untick the top option, called Scan My Computer at a scheduled time.

4 There are plenty of settings to play with and you can increase and decrease the overall security level by moving the Monitoring Level slider up and down. You'll find this by clicking the Monitor icon on AntiSpyware's main menu. This screen also provides options to review and change settings for specific monitoring, such as protection for Internet Explorer settings, Windows' network settings and Windows startup programs. **CS**

